

## ABSTRACT

An apparatus for facilitating the exchange of services between a buyer and seller includes a server having a memory to store messages posted by buyers and sellers identifying goods and services. The messages are accessible to buyers and sellers to review the messages and to provide responses thereto. The memory stores a message agreed to between the buyer and seller representing a payment plan and deliverable plan. An escrow procedure stores a monetary representation of a deposit by the buyer equal to an amount of money in an escrow account, according to the agreed upon payment plan. The escrow procedure includes a release procedure that is configured such that when the deliverables are delivered to and approved by the buyer, the release procedure releases the amount of money equal to the respective stage of the agreed upon payment plan. In one embodiment, the system compares the specified parameters to prevailing market rates, and provides the prevailing market rates to the buyer. Advantages of the invention include the ability of the service buyer and seller to connect with one another through postings, and to exchange the payment and services according to an agreed upon payment plan with the security of an escrow. Additional advantages include the ability of the service buyer to purchase the needed services at the best available market rate and to have the services delivered within the parameters identified by the buyer.